

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Project Summary
September 15, 2004

COASTAL & STATE WETLANDS MAPPING

File No. 00-118
Project Manager: Marc Beyeler

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorize expenditure of funds received from the California Resources Agency and the California Department of Fish and Game to continue to develop an updated Geographic Information Systems (GIS) based wetlands inventory and authorize disbursement of up to \$35,000 to the San Francisco Estuary Institute to provide science support for the project to implement provisions of Assembly Bill 2286.

LOCATION: Statewide.

PROGRAM CATEGORY: Resource Enhancement

EXHIBIT

Exhibit 1: June 2002 Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following Resolution pursuant to Sections 31251-31270 of the Public Resources Code:

“The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes the disbursement of an amount not to exceed two hundred twenty-five thousand hundred thirty-five thousand dollars (\$225,000) of funds received from the California Resources Agency and the California Department of Fish and Game to continue to update an inventory and a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) for state wetlands mapping, authorizes disbursement of up to thirty-five thousand dollars (\$35,000) to the San Francisco Estuary Institute to implement the provisions of Assembly Bill 2286 (wetlands), and further authorizes its Executive Officer to enter into any agreements necessary to complete this project.

Staff further recommends that the Conservancy adopt the following findings:

“Based on the accompanying staff report and attached exhibits, the State Coastal Conservancy hereby finds that:

1. The proposed project is consistent with the guidelines and criteria set forth under Chapter 6 of the Public Resources Code (Sections 31251-31270) regarding the enhancement of coastal resources; and
2. The proposed project is consistent with the guidelines and criteria set forth in the Conservancy’s Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines adopted on January 24, 2001.”

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff is recommending that the Conservancy authorize the expenditure of funds received from the California Resources Agency and the California Department of Fish and Game through two Interagency Agreements (IAA) to continue to develop an updated comprehensive statewide wetlands inventory using remotely sensed imagery and Geographic Information Systems (GIS), and authorize disbursement of up to \$35,000 to the San Francisco Estuary Institute to provide science support for the project to implement provisions of Assembly Bill 2286 and meet an critical coastal resource inventory need.

Assembly Bill 2286 (signed into law in late 2000 by Governor Davis) amends/adds sections to the Public Resources Code, relating to wetlands. Assembly Bill 2286 requires the State Resources Agency to update all of the state's existing wetlands inventory resources in order to prepare a restoration, management, and acquisition study.

In 2001, the Resources Agency and the Coastal Conservancy entered into an Interagency Agreement (IAA) to initiate development of state wetlands inventory and GIS data layer. In June 2002, the California Department of Fish and Game and the Coastal Conservancy also entered into an IAA to support this project. Also in June 2002, the Coastal Conservancy authorized the expenditure of up to \$735,000 for this project. Subsequently, additional funds have been approved by the California Resources Agency and the California Department of Fish and Game. The proposed authorization would allow the expenditure of all project monies to complete the inventory.

Over the past two years, the Resources Agency and the Coastal Conservancy have held a series of technical workshops to identify priority elements for this project. Working with the staff of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service’s (USFWS) National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) and the California Department of Fish and Game, Resources Agency staff and Conservancy staff are now completing the project work. Staff is requesting Conservancy authorization to expend funds to implement this project. The USFWS’s NWI staff is assist staffs of the Resources Agency, Department of Fish and Game and the Conservancy in implementing this project.

Project Financing:

California Resources Agency	\$50,000
California Department of Fish and Game	<u>\$175,000</u>

Additional Project Cost	\$225,000
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The sources of project funding are funds received from the California Resources Agency and the California Department of Fish and Game. In June 2002, the Conservancy approved authorization to expend the first \$735,000 contained in the original Interagency Agreements. These funds will complete project funding for the initial mapping project.

Project History:

In 2001, the Resources Agency and the Coastal Conservancy entered into a Interagency Agreement to facilitate the implementation of this work program element. Working with the staff of the Resources Agency staff, Conservancy staff has assisted in managing a collaborative process of inventorying existing wetlands data and identifying data gaps and needs involving a large group of agency personnel. Since 2002, the Coastal Conservancy staff has been participating in a collaborative project with the Resources Agency, the Department of Fish and Game and the USFWS.

Assembly Bill 2286 updates the Keene-Nejedly California Wetlands Preservation Act of 1976. Under the provisions of AB 2286, the Resources Agency is required to update and consolidate the state's existing wetlands inventory. In addition, based on the updated inventory, the Resources Agency is required to prepare a plan for the acquisition, protection, preservation, restoration, and enhancement of wetlands.

The most extensive inventory of the state of California's wetlands resources is the data set created by the US Fish and Wildlife Service's National Wildlife Inventory (NWI). According to the staff of the NWI, California is covered by nearly 2,800 large-scale quadrangles. Of this total number, fewer than fifty percent are currently in digital form. While NWI receives funding annually to update aerial surveys and digitize this information, the schedule for creating a digital wetland data under current and proposed funding would preclude the development of up-to-date digital data layer.

Other recent or ongoing wetland mapping efforts in California include the Coastal Commission's coastal wetlands inventory for portion of the north and central coast regions, the California Department of Fish and Game's vernal pool inventory, the San Francisco Estuary Institute's SF EcoAtlas, and the Coastal Conservancy's southern California Wetlands Inventory.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

The proposed project would be undertaken pursuant to Chapter 6 of the Conservancy's enabling legislation, Public Resource Code Sections 31251-31270. Consistent with this chapter and with the definition of coastal resource enhancement project, as defined in Pub-

lic Resources Code Section 31008, the proposed project would develop the most advanced GIS maps of the state's wetland resources in order to identify actions needed to be taken by local public, state and federal agency and private nonprofit organizations necessary to acquire, where necessary, and to restore and enhance the resource values throughout the coast. The use of this project will provide state agencies and cooperating conservation partners with better information and tools to support conservation investment decisions in California.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA & GUIDELINES:

The proposed project is consistent with the Conservancy's Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines adopted January 24, 2001, in the following respects:

Required Criteria

Promotion of the Conservancy's statutory programs and purposes: See the "Consistency with Conservancy's Enabling Legislation" section above.

Consistency with purposes intended for the funding: Funding from the Habitat Conservation Fund (HCF) appropriated to the Coastal Conservancy, and funds from the California Resources Agency and the California Department of Fish and Game will be used to address the protection and conservation of wetland resources and associated wetland habitats.

Location: Project funds will be used to develop improved and updated information regarding wetland resources statewide focused on coastal wetlands resources.

Need: There exist significant gaps in up-to-date data for the state's coastal wetlands to adequately inform the Conservancy's, nonprofit organizations', and local, state and federal agencies' resource enhancement priorities and projects. This project will address these gaps.

Greater-than-local interest: This project provides a tool for the conservation of the state's coastal wetlands. Additionally, such wetland protection is a statewide priority for the California Resources Agency, as well as its important operating departments and conservancies, including the California Department of Fish and Game and the Coastal Conservancy.

Additional Criteria

Realization of Prior Conservancy Goals: The Conservancy's long-standing interest and priority focus on coastal wetland resources will be addressed in the development of an improved and up-to-date wetlands database.

Cooperation: The State Wetlands Mapping effort embodied in the proposed project, has the cooperation of all agencies and stakeholders involved in wetland conservation in California, including all interested and responsible state and federal agencies, as well as other nonprofit and private conservation partners including the San Francisco Estuary Institute and the Southern California Coastal Water Research Project.

**CONSISTENCY WITH
THE COASTAL ACT:**

Section 30231 of the Coastal Act states that the “biological productivity and the quality of coastal waters, streams, wetlands, estuaries, and lakes appropriate to maintain optimum populations of marine organisms and for the protection of human health shall be maintained and, where feasible, restored.” The proposed project would develop the most advanced GIS maps of the state’s wetlands and related riparian resources, focused on coastal wetland and riparian resources, in order to identify acquisition and restoration and enhancement projects.

**COMPLIANCE
WITH CEQA:**

The proposed project is statutorily exempt from review under the California Environmental Quality Act pursuant to 14 California Code of Regulations Section 15262 as it involves only planning and feasibility analysis for possible future actions not yet approved, adopted or funded. Upon approval, staff will file a Notice of Exemption for this project. Upon approval, staff will file a Notice of Exemption for this project.

